IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

1.   (currently amended) A payment form discrimination method for discriminating a payment form which states at least a payee account number and a payment amount, comprising:

acquiring an image of the form by reading the form;

searching for the payee account number in the image<u> in an unknown position of the form</u> in accordance with an account number searching rule; and

discriminating the type of form based on the searched payee account number,

wherein said searching comprises:

recognizing said payee account number in accordance with said account number searching rule in a searching table which registers recognition categories and regularities regarding a character string from the acquired image<u> to find the account number in the unknown position</u>; and

judging whether or not said recognized payee account number is matched with the registered account number in a account master table;

and wherein said discriminating comprises discriminating the type of form by referring to a document information table that stores the account number and its type of the form by said judged payee account number.

2-3.   (cancelled)

4.   (currently amended) The payment form discrimination method of ~~Claim~~ <u>claim</u> 1, wherein the searching comprises:

recognizing a plurality of account numbers on the payment form; and

merging a plurality of results which have been recognized to determine the payee account number.

5.   (currently amended) The payment form discrimination method of ~~Claim 3~~<u>claim 1</u>, wherein the searching comprises:

searching hyphens in the image; and

subjecting surrounding areas of searched hyphens to character recognition in a specified recognition category, and determining whether the result of the character recognition has the specified regularities.

6.   (currently amended) A payment form discrimination apparatus for recognizing a form which states a payee account number and a payment amount, comprising:

an image reader for acquiring an image of the form by reading the form; and

a processing unit, which <u>performs</u> searching for the payee account number in the image <u>in an unknown position of the form</u> in accordance with an account number searching rule, and discriminates the type of form based on the searched payee account number;

wherein the processing unit recognizes respective areas of the image by corresponding recognition categories, depending on the type of form that has been discriminated,

wherein said searching comprises:

recognizing said payee account number in accordance with said account number searching rule in a searching table which registers recognition categories and regularities regarding a character string from the acquired image<u> to find the account number in the unknown position</u>; and

judging whether or not said recognized payee account number is matched with the registered account number in a account master table;

and wherein said discriminating comprises discriminating the type of form by referring a document information table that stores the account number and its type of the form by said judged payee account number.

7-8.   (cancelled)

9.   (currently amended) The payment form discrimination apparatus of ~~Claim~~ <u>claim</u> 6, wherein the process unit recognizes a plurality of account numbers on the payment form, and merges a plurality of result which have been recognized to determine the payee account number.

10.   (currently amended) The payment form discrimination apparatus of ~~Claim 8~~<u>claim</u> <u>6</u>, wherein the process unit searches hyphens in the image, subjects surrounding areas of searched hyphens to character recognition in a specified recognition category, and determines whether the result of the character recognition has the specified regularities.

11.   (previously presented) The payment form discrimination method according to claim 1, wherein said recognizing comprises:

recognizing a hyphens defined by said account number recognition category in said searching table from said image;

judging whether or not said recognized hyphens are characterizing hyphen registered in said account number construction rule in said searching table; and

character-recognizing an image on areas surrounding to said characterizing hyphen by a numeric and a hyphen that are account number recognition category in said searching table.

12.   (previously presented) The payment form discrimination method according to claim 4, wherein said searching further comprises:

determining said recognized account number as a merging result from a reject number of plural said character recognition result and a number of recognition character as same character in a same column.

13.   (previously presented) The payment form discrimination apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said processing unit recognizes a hyphens defined by said account number recognition category in said searching table from said image, judges whether or not said recognized hyphens are characterizing hyphen registered in said account number construction rule in said searching table, and character-recognizes an image on areas surrounding to said characterizing hyphen by a numeric and a hyphen that are account number recognition category in said searching table.

14.   (previously presented) The payment form discrimination apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said processing unit determines said recognized account number as a merging result from a reject number of plural said character recognition result and a number of recognition character as same character in a same column.

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15.   (currently amended) A method of determining a payment form type, comprising:

capturing an image of ~~an unknown type~~ a payment form <u>of an unknown type</u>;

searching for and determining an account number <u>in an unknown position </u>of the ~~unknown type ~~payment form<u> of the unknown type</u> in the image; and

determining the payment<u> form</u> type using the account number.

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